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Central Congregational UCC visits Stewart Detention Center

On Oct. 1, 2011 a small group from Central Congregational UCC traveled to the Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin, Ga. (some three hours from Atlanta)....where nearly 2,000 men - immigrants - are imprisoned because they are "undocumented". The "crime" for many of them was doing hard labor here at low pay for willing employers – but with no residence papers.



The SDC is a bleak, depressing prison run by the Corrections Corporation of America for ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement). Our tax dollars pay for this, keeping men jailed for months awaiting a hearing or trial and/or deportation. The stories we heard from the men we visited were heart-rending – some families torn asunder; some men here in the U.S. since childhood who know no other country; some here a few years but hard-working and "innocent". The whole situation was sad – and is so unjust!

One positive thing in it all is that concerned Christians have established a small hospitality house a mile from the prison so when family members come to visit, many from as far away as N.C., they have a bed, meals and a warm welcome. It's called "El Refugio" and it is indeed "a refuge".

Our purpose was to visit and to bring cheer as well as to listen and learn – and then come back and tell the story and work for justice. We seek justice in the form of comprehensive, humane, immigration reform (and alternatives to detention) as well as urging support of El Refugio and related ministries of compassion and advocacy. May we at Central reach out and make a difference....

Written by Rev. Joyce Myers-Brown, October 17, 2011

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